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OBSERVATIONS  
ON THE  
**Diseases**  
OF  
PEOPLE OF FASHION,  
IN WHICH THEIR  
CAUSES & EFFECTS

ARE INVESTIGATED AND EXPLAINED;

AND

*The most judicious Mode of Treatment, founded on long and  
ample Experience, recommended;*

ADDRESSED TO

THE GAY, THE DISSIPATED,  
The Intemperate,

AND THE

SEDENTARY OF ALL CLASSES.

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BY M. VENEL, M.D.

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Non est vivere, sed valere, vita.

MARTIAL.

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## OBSERVATIONS,

&c.

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**I**T is clearly ascertained, and generally acknowledged, that the habits of fashionable life, occasion various deviations from a state of health, which, neglected and aggravated by a series of irregularities, become chronic diseases, identified with the *constitution* and entailed on *posterity*. These hereditary diseases, transmitted from generation to generation, assume new features, and account for our being afflicted in the present era, with morbid affections unknown to our ancestors.

THE GOUT, formerly a regular disease, with which few persons were attacked before they had passed the middle of their lives, and which was usually confined to the extremities, has now become a prevalent indisposition, a juvenile complaint, torturing the patient in a thousand different forms. The podagra and chiragra of the last century, are now nearly obsolete; and instead of the gout in the feet or hands, we meet every day with cases of the *nervous gout*, the gout in the head, and even the more dangerous gout in the stomach. Neither rank, age, sex, nor mode of life, seem to be exempt from this fashionable enemy, which is rendered more ferocious by sensual indulgence, and requires all the address of science and experience to restrain and vanquish.

A new Disease, still more general, although it has not yet received a name, is manifested by an extreme sensibility to every change of the atmosphere, or rather a preternatural subjection to its influence. These living barometers are affected by every current of air, every change of heat and cold; and the feelings of some are so exquisitely delicate, that, in a close apartment, nay even in bed, they can determine, with accuracy, the state of the weather, as well as the direction of the wind:—a talent so peculiar would undoubtedly excite the surprise, but not the envy of our forefathers: and, in a climate so variable as ours, it may easily be conceived, how frail and fluctuating must be the health, the comfort, the temper, and even the physical existence of individuals endowed with this *new* sense.

*Nervous and Hypochondriacal Diseases* are equally prevalent,



but much more distressing; they are the source of misery so tormenting, various, and complex, that they render all our enjoyments insipid, disqualify us for the most important social duties; and, without endangering life, render it an insupportable burthen—without inducing death, make him a welcome visitor. To detail the diversified shapes in which these insidious enemies assail us, would fill volumes; and lead to the discussion of almost every malady incidental to mankind. Acting and reacting reciprocally upon the body and the mind, they destroy the energies of both; and render their victims a prey to mental anguish and corporeal suffering: they alternate with most chronic diseases, and are the prolific parents of many.

*Hæmorrhoids*, formerly a disease of the aged, are now almost a general complaint, the companion of early youth, and the result of high, artificial, and irregular living.

*Diseases of the Skin*, known by the name of eruptions, discolourations, efflorescences, scorbutic taints, &c. constitute another class of fashionable diseases, which have increased of late in a very alarming degree; and appear to extend to all classes of the community. Even in the higher ranks, where neither a poor diet, nor want of attention to cleanliness can be the causes, cutaneous disorders appear which manifest great inveteracy, and resist the effect of the most powerful remedies. New affections of the skin, of very malignant aspect, have been lately developed; some of which have been attributed to the introduction of the vaccine matter. Medical practitioners have been at a loss not only how to treat, but even how to denominate them; and if their progress is not checked, we have reason to apprehend, that we may again be visited by that most tremendous scourge, *the leprosy*, or some infectious cutaneous disorder, very analagous to it.

*The last Class of fashionable Complaints*, and certainly by far the most general, comprehends the various morbid affections of the stomach and bowels, as dyspepsia or indigestion, obstructions, constipations, flatulence, bilious disorders, and all the various symptoms occasioned by the irregular or unhealthy action of these important organs; and certainly no diseases can be more aggravated than these too often are by indiscretion, neglect, and improper treatment. They are connected, directly or indirectly, with all the foregoing: they not only curtail the period of existence, but render the scanty remnant of life, miserable; impairing the corporeal functions and mental faculties; inducing the infirmities of premature old age; and blighting the constitution at that time of life, when it ought to flourish in all the vigour of maturity.



This may be considered a catalogue of fashionable ailments; for, although no rank in life can be exempt from the various diseases incidental to the human frame, it will be found, that those which I have detailed, are the offspring of gay and dissipated habits; which may be proved by observing that the less affluent classes of the community are more or less exempt from these concomitants of wealth, in proportion as they approximate to the simple frugal habits of the indigent peasant.

I shall endeavour to prove that all these complaints may be prevented or relieved, by means of very simple remedies, without depriving the affluent of the rational enjoyment of any of the comforts or conveniences of refined society. Attentive observation in the practice of my profession for upwards of twenty years, which has been extensive, and very much among the higher classes of the community, has convinced me, that those who are seriously disposed to conform to the rules prescribed may be relieved, if they will consent to forego a few irrational indulgences, for the attainment and preservation of that health which gives a zest to all enjoyment, and without which, wealth and honours are nugatory and insipid. *Acute diseases* may arise from accident or infection; they are sometimes epidemical, and cannot be guarded against; but when they attack a healthy subject, they are more tractable and much less likely to prove fatal than when their influence is added to *chronic diseases*, by which the animal functions have been previously impaired. I would, therefore, most earnestly endeavour to impress on the mind of every individual, the necessity of attending to the early stages of those insidious chronic affections, which gradually destroy the best constitutions; and caution them against the indiscretion of concluding, too hastily, that their complaints are constitutional and incurable. I am consulted every day by individuals who have suffered a great deal from this erroneous conclusion; and I have no doubt that this tract will be read by many who can confirm, from their own experience, that such a conclusion is very erroneous: for I have many patients who, before they applied to me, had been for years under the painful necessity of taking medicine almost daily, to palliate chronic complaints, particularly irregular digestion and other morbid affections of the stomach and bowels, often erroneously called, and treated as, bilious complaints, who now enjoy good health, and seldom require the aid of medicine. Nor have I a doubt, that many persons, by adopting my plan, might greatly prolong their lives, and increase their enjoyments; because it is simple, rational, founded on an aversion to the habitual or too frequent use of medicine, and confirmed by long and ample experience.



Man is the only animal who gratifies his appetites in inordinate excess; and every act of excess is derogatory to his reason, and prejudicial to his health. Excessive eating, excessive drinking, excessive indolence, excessive study, excessive joy, excessive grief, excessive anger, excessive love, excessive hatred, excessive indulgence in any sensual or corporeal pleasure, deranges the animal functions, impairs the intellectual faculties, injures the health, and lays the foundation of many formidable diseases: and how degrading to human nature is it to reflect, that the inferior animals manifest, in this respect, a degree of moderation and discretion superior to that portion of the creation, which controuls the universe, and for whose use and convenience all other animals appear to have been created! How irrational, for the sake of a transitory gratification of the palate, to incur the risk of injuring the stomach! But gluttony and drunkenness, though certainly the most gross, are by no means the most dangerous excesses of the present day. Effeminaey and voluptuousness are the hot-beds in which the germs of disease are forced into early maturity. Young persons, who inherit the feebleness and infirmity of their predecessors, plunge into the gulph of intemperance at so early a period of their lives, that they arrest the progress of nature, and render it improbable, if not impossible, that they should ever attain the full developement of their growth or faculties: or, if they are so fortunate as to escape this early danger, no sooner are they arrived at an age when the restraints of education and tutelage are removed, than, hurried into the vortex of licentiousness, they pursue its baneful round with insatiate avidity, until exhausted, debilitated, and diseased, they find themselves condemned to the infirmities of a premature old age, just at that time of life when a more prudent and temperate course would have qualified them for the enjoyment of the most grateful and durable social pleasures. This picture is by no means exaggerated, though it is not general; and we observe that many persons, arrived at an age when reason should assume her full ascendancy, continue from habit those irregularities, which reflection must condemn. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, states, even at that remote period, that young married persons, who exceeded the limits of moderation, were often afflicted with that species of decline, called *Tabes Dorsalis*, or consumption of the back. But, in our days, the evil is anticipated: and a great portion of our youth, when they approach the altar of Hymen, are incompetent to the duties of the married state. I am aware that this is a delicate subject; but it is connected with an evil of such increasing magnitude, that if I did not refer to it, I should very



imperfectly fulfil the task I have undertaken. Boerhaave, Stork, Hoffman, Tissot, and Zimmerman in his interesting work on Solitude, have all discussed it; and I have myself published a short tract on the same subject, called "*Hints to the Nervous and Debilitated*," which is sold at my house, No. 10, Alfred Place, Bedford Square, and which I would most earnestly recommend to the perusal of all young persons, and to the parents and preceptors of youth, whom we often see fall into a bad state of health, for which we are very much at a loss to account: the mystery will be unravelled in many cases, though not in all, by perusing the tract I have alluded to.

Most of the foregoing observations will be found to apply equally to both sexes; but *women* of fashion are particularly subject to morbid affections, peculiar to their sex, from which the female peasantry, and women who lead regular lives, are nearly, though not entirely, exempt.

That species of chlorosis, incidental to young girls, which is occasioned by undue and too protracted retention, is common enough in the country, where we often see girls of eighteen or twenty years of age, who have never manifested the criterion of maturity. This, however, is easily accounted for, by natural causes peculiar to a life of labour and privation. But in fashionable life, young females are mature much too soon; for early maturity often debilitates them for the remainder of their lives, and entails on them the germs of many languishing disorders, the consequence of too relaxed a fibre: their vascular system never acquires its proper tone; and, therefore, the most important functions are but imperfectly performed. This species of irregularity is the source of so much vexation and misery to ladies in the higher ranks of life, that few of them would hesitate to sacrifice a small portion of their indulgences, in order to be qualified for the full enjoyment of the residue; and it is with great pleasure I can assure them, that this is perfectly practicable. I have been consulted by more women, perhaps, than any other physician in existence; and, by long experience, have acquired that faculty of discrimination, which alone can enable any practitioner to discover remote causes, and so vary and apportion the appropriate remedies, as to attack the evil at its root, and not to palliate, but eradicate, the morbid symptoms, and permanently re-establish the healthy action of the most important organs. Even in cases which appeared likely to disappoint young married women, in their hopes of having families, I have succeeded, in many instances, beyond my own expectations; for I am by no means sanguine; nor will I ever delude any individual, by exciting hope, unless I know it to be



well founded on rational conclusions, or on my own experience in similar cases. Females in the indigent and laborious classes of society, who reside in the country and live on frugal fare, are gradually matured; and their faculties are developed, and their functions established, with uniform regularity; which contributes very much to the preservation of their health, whilst their passions, actuated by few excitements, have only a salutary influence. But, with females in fashionable life, the case is very different: their mode of living renders them obnoxious to nervous affections, indigestion, and every species of irregularity in their secretions, which are sometimes profuse, often deficient, and not unfrequently obstructed or suppressed—producing a multitude of evils, aggravated by the passions of the mind. When we consider that obstructed perspiration alone is sufficient to occasion acute and dangerous diseases, can we wonder at the havock which we daily witness in the most lovely part of creation? Their style of clothing is often sufficient to injure their health; and in delicate and unhealthy subjects, must obstruct their amendment and recovery. The *fluor albus* is a disorder rare among country women, but very common to women of fashion. Its varieties, effects, and causes, would occupy too considerable a space in this small tract; nor would it be proper to enter into their accurate description in a work intended for general perusal. I shall, therefore, merely observe, that lowness of spirits, weakness, a melancholy disposition, loathing, weight and pain at the pit of the stomach, paleness, emaciation, and a down-cast look, are common symptoms of this disorder; that it may be dependant on the most opposite causes; that if it continues for any considerable length of time, it ruins the health, and impairs the nerves. If not timely relieved, it is very difficult to be cured: and, certainly, it is the most frequent effect of that inflammatory mode of life so common among people of fashion.

The foregoing complaints render frequent abortion much more common in the gorgeous palace, than in the humble cottage, and occasion many noble families to become extinct. It is to be lamented, that the first miscarriage often paves the way for a second, and that again for a third; until the delicate fair one is enfeebled, enervated, and exhausted beyond all hope of recovery. It is a great satisfaction to me, to feel authorised by experience to declare, that most of these disorders are curable; and that the regimen necessary to be observed during a proper course of medicine, by no means implies an injunction to forego any of the rational enjoyments of life: without renouncing pleasure, abstain from its abuse—without becoming a savage



or a rustic, recollect that you are a human being. Nature will not suffer her laws to be constantly violated with impunity ; and be assured that the greatest sensualist cannot more effectually augment his enjoyments, than by occasional abstinence and uniform moderation.

By addressing these observations to people of fashion, I do not mean to confine them to the noble and affluent ; they will be found to apply with equal force, to persons in every rank of life, who pursue the baneful track of habitual excess, irregularity, and dissipation, which pervades almost the whole population of all great cities, where the allurements of gaiety, and the influence of example, disseminate a bias almost irresistible, and conduct their victims, by imperceptible gradations, into the very vortex of debauchery. At the same time I would wish to remove an impression which I have heard with regret, operated on the minds of many—that in consequence of my extensive practice, I expected an extravagant remuneration for my professional services. The very reverse is the fact ; because the number, the respectability, and the munificence of my patients render me independent of such sordid considerations. I remain at home every day until two o' clock, to receive all who are willing to do me the honour to consult me ; for whom I prescribe to the best of my abilities, and I am proud to say, generally with effect ; nor do I look for, or expect more, than the customary fee, which every professional man is entitled to—though certainly when a very essential service has been rendered to an individual, it is not unreasonable to anticipate an additional acknowledgment proportioned to the benefit received and the ability of the party : but this is always optional, and never demanded. It is ever irksome to a person of sensibility, to incur the imputation of being an egotist, by discussing such a topic. But whilst I am on the subject, I think it proper to caution the reader against a deception often practised on the public by unprincipled adventurers, who endeavour to give importance to their nostrums by attaching to them the names of men of celebrity. Among others, my name has been made use of for this base purpose ; and a person, who was formerly my servant, is now endeavouring to delude the unwary, by obtruding on them what he calls my tonic medicine, for which he has no authority whatever—and which must be a very dangerous deception, because he is so entirely ignorant of every branch of medical science. No person of mature judgment can be deceived by such impositions : but the incautious should be put on their guard, and every person should know, that unless I am applied to, either personally or in writing, they cannot avail



themselves of the professional knowledge which is the result of protracted study, laborious investigation, and great experience.

The cold bath is generally considered a tonic remedy, as it is so frequently prescribed by medical practitioners; and as I recommend it myself in many cases, in which I have reason to believe it will be of service; it may be acceptable to the reader, perhaps, to peruse the following observations on its salutary effects in some cases, and the danger of it in others. Cold bathing, as an act of cleanliness, cannot be too strongly recommended; it removes impurities from the surface of the body, promotes perspiration, and increases the circulation of the blood. The apprehension of injury from the coldness of the water is very ill founded; for it not only produces a strengthening effect, but, by its astringent property, the cold sensation is of service: so that even the infirm and debilitated, under proper restrictions, may derive the greatest benefit from it. Certain precautions, however, are absolutely necessary; for in summer, when the body is overheated by exercise, it may prove fatal by causing apoplexy. The plethoric, the asthmatic, and all those who have reason to apprehend a determination of blood to the head, should be very circumspect in its use: for, although the consequence may not prove immediately fatal, yet, from the sudden force and pressure of the water, some of the smaller blood vessels of the head or breast may be ruptured, and lay the foundation of an incurable disorder.

Among the Greeks, and particularly the Spartans, bathing was not left to the option of individuals, but considered as a public institution, which was regulated by the express laws of the state. We learn also, from sacred history, that the Jews, at a much earlier period, considered persons under certain circumstances unclean, and consequently unfit to hold an intercourse with others, until they had performed the appointed ablutions. The Greeks, according to their own historians, learnt this practice from the Egyptians, and the Romans from the Greeks. With these celebrated nations, public and private baths formed an important branch of useful and ornamental architecture; the remains of which are to be seen at the present time.

The sensible properties of the cold bath, consist in its power of contracting the solid parts, and of inspissating the fluids. Any part of the body which is exposed to the sudden contact of cold water, experiences at the same instant a degree of tension and contraction, and becomes narrower and smaller: not only the blood vessels, but likewise the minute capillary tubes, are liable to this contraction, and a subsequent relaxation. Al-



though in this point of view, the effect of the cold bath may be considered as altogether mechanical; yet this simple operation is frequently productive of the most important and beneficial effects. The sudden changes occasioned by the application of the cold bath contribute, in various ways, to brace the human body: the relaxed fibres of the skin and muscles acquire more solidity and compactness from contraction; their elasticity is increased; the nerves are stimulated and incited to that activity, on which the ease, vigour, and alacrity of the body so much depend; and the circulation of the blood receives a salutary impetus.

But, in all those cases in which the cold bath might repel certain eruptive humours, which Nature determines towards the surface of the body, it cannot be resorted to without danger: many conditions of the body and various morbid symptoms forbid its use. Apoplexies have been the frequent consequence of indiscreet bathing: and, as a preventive remedy for children and young persons, it is very doubtful. Galen remarks, that the cold bath does not agree with a growing person, and advises young people not to bathe at all, until the body be completely formed; because the frequent use of the cold bath powerfully contracts the fibres, and imparts to the juvenile body an unnatural degree of solidity and compactness, whereby it too soon acquires the properties of an adult. These cursory observations comprise but a very small portion of what might be said on this important subject; but they may suffice, at once, to demonstrate the great advantages that may be derived from this excellent tonic remedy, in many complaints prevalent among people of fashion, and to evince the danger of its indiscreet use.

There are many other remedies, which are equally injurious when they are abused, or too frequently administered. Bleeding, purgative medicines, and emetics, often aggravate diseases which they are intended to cure; and, because they palliate the symptoms and produce temporary relief, they are used, by some unhappy persons, almost habitually, to the irreparable injury of constitutions, which a more judicious mode of treatment might restore to a regular good state of health. I have a most unconquerable aversion to this palliative system. Whenever a patient applies to me, I endeavour to ascertain the true nature and original cause of complaint; and then point out those means which are likely to effect a radical cure and prevent a relapse. In nervous cases, which are, perhaps, of all others, the most frequent among people of fashion and the inhabitants of great cities in general, I recommend the use of medicines,



whose primary operation is on the stomach, restoring the digestive powers, and sending from that organ new health, life, and vigour into every part of the frame: for, as the stomach is, in a great measure, the source from which proceed most of the evils already described, so it must be the first object of attention in the cure; and from it the salutary streams must flow, that are to invigorate and revive the whole body; thus attacking the evil at the very root, such medicines remove, at the same time, the effect and the cause, and gradually restore that healthy action of all the animal functions which constitutes *a good state of health*: and we know that all the juices of the body are secreted in the stomach, or that the materials for their secretion are supplied by that organ. Thus the tone and elasticity of the fibres are re-established, and the sound healthful sensibility of the nerves is restored, at the same time that their morbid and excessive irritability is removed, not by any immediate or violent action on the nervous system, but by enriching and purifying those sources from whence the nerves derive their subtile fluid. Those stimulating cordials and medicines which produce immediate and violent excitements are inevitably destructive; though they are often taken with avidity by valetudinarians, anxious to procure a momentary respite from their sufferings, which are certain to return very soon with encreased inveteracy. This short sketch of the manner in which I treat nervous complaints, will convey to the reader an idea of the plan which I adopt in all chronic disorders. It may, in some cases, appear tedious; but it is the most rational, the most judicious, and the most certain, to effect the permanent re-establishment of health. If I were to detail the number of nervous, bilious, dyspeptic, gouty, rheumatic, eruptive, and other chronic cases, which I have successfully treated on this plan, the largest volume that ever was printed would not contain the recital. In almost every corner of the kingdom there are individuals, with whom my communications were by letters only, who have been restored from a state of long protracted disease, and miserable debility, to all the comforts of sound good health; a blessing which few can appreciate, who have not experienced the want of it.

Such is the inconsistency of mankind, that although every individual is solicitous to prolong the period of existence, a very small portion pursue the only rational method of accomplishing that object. The wish of a speedy termination of our existence in this world, is one of those eccentricities, the result of extreme anxiety or want of fortitude, so unnatural, as to be deemed a proof of mental derangement. But, generally speaking, men



In all ages have set a just value on long life; and in proportion to the means of enjoyment, this estimation predominates in a greater or less degree. If the gratification of the appetites constituted the principle object of living, and if existence implied the faculty of enjoyment, the prolongation of it would be, to the epicure and the sensualist, as desirable in their estimation, as the prospect of a life beyond the grave is to the moralist and true believer. This, however, is by no means the case; for immoderate enjoyment curtails our existence; and without health, a long life is only protracted misery. But, with all its vicissitudes, the desire of longevity seems to be inherent in all animated nature, particularly in the human race: it is fondly cherished by us throughout the whole course of our existence, and sought to be obtained, not only by rational means, but by a variety of expedients erroneous, delusive, and improper.

In the Old Testament, the promise of a long life is held out as one of the most important sources of consolation. It is therefore no wonder that, in the earliest ages, the ancients, particularly in the East, endeavoured to discover the means of prolonging human life: with this view, they placed the aged and decrepid in an atmosphere replete with the exhalations of blooming youth; conceiving that they were capable of softening the rigidity of the fibres, of infusing fresh vital spirits, and supplying the aged with a fresh stock of health. The history of King David furnishes us with an illustration of this renovating process. Modern physicians have commended the practice; and the celebrated Boerhaave informs us, that he prescribed it, with the best effect, for a Burgomaster at Amsterdam, a patient of his, who was sinking under a weight of infirmities, and who, by this means, obviously recovered a considerable degree of strength and cheerfulness of mind. Upon accurate enquiry, however, it is evident, that the benefits which the aged and infirm derive from such experiments, must be attributed to the imagination, and its surprising effects on the body. It is this power which renews the languishing flame of the aged, and which may preserve them, for a time, in that renovated state, with proper attention to diet and other circumstances. We may frequently observe peevish debilitated old people assume a complacent smiling aspect, when in company and familiar conversation with the young and gay of the opposite sex, by whom they are particularly attracted: on such occasions, the most fascinating images recur to their excited imagination, their animal spirits are roused, and they appear to acquire fresh powers of life.

That such an influence of the imagination may re-animate old



age, and have a favourable effect on health, at every period of our lives, cannot be disputed; but, to imagine that the vigour of health and the bloom of youth can be transfused by exhalation or insensible perspiration, is a most egregious error; for every living being necessarily vitiates the air by its respiration; and the atmosphere, thus impregnated, becomes unfit for others to breathe in; because, every expiration contains certain particles, which are separated by the lungs, as not only useless, but noxious to the body. How then is it possible, that that, which, if retained, would be injurious to the one, should, when communicated, be useful to another? The phenomenon can only be explained by concluding, that the slumbering energies of life are aroused, and receive a fresh impetus from the powers of the imagination and natural warmth, means fully competent to effect the salutary change; so that we should not too hastily condemn the practice of the ancients, although we should carefully guard against attributing its efficacy to erroneous principles.

The Egyptian physicians not distinguishing between cause and effect, and considering *disease* the only obstacle to longevity, endeavoured to prevent all diseases, and to prolong life, by the habitual use of active sudorifics and emetics; but we know that the periodical custom of taking medicine renders its repetition more frequently necessary, while it destroys even its occasional efficacy. The Greeks imagined that the art consisted in various modifications of the *gymnastic exercises*: the advantage of which, in many cases, cannot be disputed; for a person inured to frequent and laborious exercise, will not be easily affected by many of the external causes of disease; and there can be no doubt, that a premature death is often occasioned by want of motion, activity, and nervous energy. But it would be absurd to consider these exercises a universal remedy: in many cases they must be highly injurious; and we cannot suppose that an individual, exhausted by previous exertion, could be either strengthened or refreshed by additional exercise. These enlightened people, however, were acquainted with many excellent remedies founded on the true philosophy of medicine, which are still in use, and will continue to be so, as long as the healing art continues to be practised by men of education and science. Plutarch possessed clear and rational ideas on the means of preserving and prolonging human life, the truth of which he confirmed, by his own experience, during a series of many happy years. What he recommends is rational and salutary; but we must not imagine that the grand secret consists solely in the observance of his maxims. Let



us not, however, disparage the merits of the ancients, whom we only know by their inimitable works. In their mode of treating diseases, they proceeded in a more cautious, gradual, and judicious manner, than the moderns seem willing to submit to: but the present race are subject to diseases almost unknown to the ancients; their clothing, food, habits and modes of life are altogether different; they have acquired a different temperament, and therefore we must adopt a different mode of treating diseases, and different means to preserve health and prolong life.

Lewis Cornaro, the noble Venetian, is a memorable instance, that a person disordered and even reduced to the brink of the grave may be restored to health and vigour for a great number of years. He had been a professed epicure and libertine until he entered into the fortieth year of his age; when his constitution was so far reduced by the colic, impaired digestion, rheumatic pains, nervous fever, &c. that his physicians assured him he could not survive much longer than two months; and that no medicines whatever could avert this catastrophe without abstinence and a steady adherence to a regulated diet. He punctually followed their advice, perceived symptoms of convalescence within a few days, from the commencement of his plan of reformation; and, at the end of twelve months, was not only restored, but found himself in a better state of health than he ever had been during any period of his life. He resolved therefore to confine himself to a spare diet, and to take no more food than he considered absolutely necessary for his support: and thus he continued to live upwards of sixty years, during which long period he carefully avoided violent heat, extreme cold, turbulent passions, and every kind of excess; and, by rigidly adhering to this plan, not only his body, but his mind, acquired so determined a tone, that no common incidents could affect them. At a very advanced age he lost a law suit, which involved pecuniary concerns of great importance; in consequence of which two of his brothers died broken hearted, but he still retained his health and equanimity. At another time, his carriage was overturned, and dragged along by the horses, by which his arms and legs were dislocated: but they were reduced by his surgeon, and without taking any medicine he was soon restored. When Cornaro had reached his eightieth year, his friends prevailed on him to add a small portion to his daily quantum of food; alledging that his advanced age necessarily called for additional support. Although he was not convinced by this argument, being of opinion that, with the gradual decrease of strength in old age our powers of digestion



are more feeble, and that we ought rather to diminish than to increase our food, in proportion to the decay of nature; yet he yielded to the solicitations of his friends, and added a few ounces to his daily allowance. In giving an account of this circumstance, he says,—“ Scarcely had I proceeded in this new mode of living for ten days, before I found my spirits sensibly affected; a fretful peevish temper succeeded to my former cheerfulness and gaiety, so that I became a burthen to myself and others: this change of temper was followed by symptoms still more alarming. On the twelfth day I was attacked with a pain in my side, which continued for twenty-four hours together; and soon after I found myself oppressed by a fever that raged with unabated violence for thirty-five days, so that my life was despaired of. By the blessing of God, however, on returning to my former regimen, I recovered from this shock, and now enjoy in my eighty-third year health of body and serenity of mind; I can mount my horse without assistance, can climb steep precipices, and very lately I wrote a comedy abounding with traits of innocent mirth and raillery. When I return home after being engaged in my private affairs, or from the councils of state, I feel inexpressible satisfaction in the company of my grand-children, eleven in number, whose education, amusements, and songs are the comforts of my age. I frequently join them in singing, as my voice is now stronger and clearer than I ever knew it be in my youth, and as my happiness is not disturbed by the complaints, the moroseness, and melancholy humours so frequently the lot of intemperate old age.”

In this happy frame of body and mind, Cornaro attained his hundredth year; his virtuous and memorable example, however, has hitherto had but few imitators. He ascertained by observation and experience, that a strict, uniform regimen, or a regular daily allowance of food and drink, was the best method *he* could pursue, for the purpose of prolonging his life: but it does not follow, in general, that any precise portion of nutriment is to be considered a proper standard by which *all persons* are to regulate their diet. The restoration of strength derived from the supplies of nutriment, ought to bear an exact proportion to the losses sustained by the body. He, for instance, who spends little of his time in bed, and much in the open air, takes frequent exercise, is employed in some active occupation, makes long journeys on foot or horseback, or the like, will feel himself refreshed and strengthened, after partaking a plentiful meal and cheering beverage; and such a repast is even indispensable to him, to recruit the sources of his



muscular strength and activity. On the contrary, if a person, who lounges away half of his time in bed, or upon the sofa, were to consume a quantity of food equal to the former, he would no doubt feel himself heavy and uncomfortable : yet here, too, the consequent loss of strength may vary in degree in different sedentary persons, which affords an opportunity to apply to individual cases the doctrine suggested by the experience of Cornaro.

The age of man bears a certain proportion to the growth of his various powers; and the longer we can protract the different stages of life, the more extended will be the whole compass of our existence. As it is evidently the design of Nature, that man should live longer than the inferior animals, he of course requires a longer time to develop the faculties both of mind and body : and in this principle his bulk makes no variation; for horses and oxen, though so much more bulky, arrive much more rapidly at maturity, and are much shorter lived. But man requires upwards of twenty, and according to some, twenty-five years, before he attains to full maturity. In the works of the illustrious Bacon, particularly in his "Historical View of Life and Death," many strong arguments are deduced to prove that animals in general live eight times the number of years, which is requisite to the attainment of their perfect growth; a strong presumption that the age of man might be extended to nearly two hundred years ! But, every expedient which hastens the evolution of the natural powers, every exertion of strength disproportionate to the ability of the individual, is of a pernicious tendency, and inimical to longevity : so that the great art of education, the great art of living, consists in adhering as nearly as possible to the rules of Nature. I must however observe, that maxims of health, universally applicable to the state of every individual, are not discoverable in nature; nor can they be derived from any experimental knowledge we possess. The best general precept is, that every one should study himself, and his own particular constitution; that he choose and regulate his mode of life accordingly; that he adhere to what his own experience points out as most suitable and convenient to him ; and, above all, that he never neglect any chronic disease, but apply without delay for advice, and pursue the means recommended until the morbid affection is perfectly eradicated; and then adopt such a dietetic system as is best calculated to prevent any return of these complaints, to which there may appear to be a constitutional disposition. The origin of many formidable diseases will be discovered, and the most judicious mode of treating them ascertained, by perusing some



of the small tracts which I have published from time to time. Of these, my “Hints to the Nervous and Debilitated;” “Medical Admonitions to Married People, or Those who intend to enter into the Married State;” and “The Lady’s Physician, or Every Woman her own Doctor;” will be found, one or other of them, to apply directly or indirectly to every family in the kingdom: and I flatter myself that every person, who will take the trouble to peruse them, will obtain information which may be of the most important service to them, either immediately or at some future period of their lives. They may be had at my house, No. 10, Alfred Place, Bedford Square, at any hour of the day; and are published separately, for the convenience of individuals, at such low prices as cannot be an object to any person. I speak of the utility of these little publications with confidence, because so many persons, by reading them, have acquired an accurate idea of the real nature of their complaints; and having applied for advice before it was too late, have been radically cured of various disorders, which, if they had been neglected, would have rendered them incapable of enjoying the comforts of society, and have brought them to an early grave. Many of the persons alluded to I have never seen, although I have had frequent communications with them by letter; and to many it is a great satisfaction to know, that they may obtain the advice of an experienced physician, without a personal interview, though certainly a personal consultation facilitates the treatment and expedites the cure; besides which, it is less expensive to the patient, because a medical man who has had much practice will ascertain more particulars of a case in one conversation, than by three or four letters; therefore, those who write cannot be too explicit. There are many cases, in which secrecy is most earnestly desired, and on this subject my discretion is unimpeachable. My house is conveniently arranged for the reception of patients; and before two, or after five o’clock, I am always to be found at home. In nervous and bilious complaints, indigestion and other disorders of the stomach and bowels, and in that species of languor and debility which is so prevalent among people of fashion, which is so distressing to themselves and so mortifying to their families, by blighting the hopes of posterity, my success is uniform in every case, which is within the power of medicine to relieve. I have studied all the various symptoms of those complaints, with the most unremitting attention, for many years; and by the most minute investigation of causes and effects, the most accurate observation of all the symptoms and changes in an immense number of cases, and the most in-



defatigable application to a selected branch of my profession, I feel confident that I have acquired a very superior mode of treatment, which usually terminates in the radical cure of the complaint, and the renovation of constitutional energy and vigour. My medicines are so selected, combined, and adapted, by various modifications, to each individual case, that they not only subdue all the morbid symptoms, but, at the same time, remove their cause and prevent their return, provided they are taken as directed for a proper length of time, and the rules for diet and regimen complied with. But all the experience and care of the most skilful physician in the universe cannot restore health to the diseased, unless the cure is promoted by attention to whatever the disorder requires, and abstinence from every thing that can retard or render the cure impossible.

A certain Countess was very strongly recommended to me, about two years ago, by a lady, a patient of mine; and when she first called on me, she said that she applied more in compliance with the wishes of her female friend, than from any hopes she could herself entertain of being relieved, from the complication of diseases which she conceived she laboured under. Besides a variety of other complaints, she was persuaded that she had a consumption of the lungs: according to her own account, she was dreadfully troubled with bile, extremely nervous, and frequently afflicted with a violent head-ache; which she concluded must be either rheumatic, or occasioned by hydrocephalus. On investing the case, however, I ascertained that her conclusions were mostly erroneous; for she certainly was neither bilious nor consumptive; but her nervous system was extremely debilitated, and her digestive organs very much impaired; the violent head-ache was merely symptomatic. When I assured her that I had no doubt of relieving her effectually, without placing her under any great restraint as to diet and regimen, she imagined that, actuated by motives of humanity, I wished to delude her, and that I had no hopes of her recovery, or even of her lingering much longer, on this side the grave: but when I assured her I was serious, and explained to her the data from which my conclusions were drawn, she began to conceive some hopes, and promised to follow my prescriptions with exact punctuality. I gave this lady a regular course of tonic medicines, very different certainly from the common-place preparations of bark, bitters, and stimulating cordials, which may palliate, but never can cure nervous atrophy. Instead of aggravating the great languor and debility she complained of by the operation of purgative medicines, I gave her a preparation calculated to excite an increased



action in the organs of digestion, and gradually to restore their proper tone, and I advised her to use a chamber bath once a day. These medicines were changed, and varied occasionally; but the same plan was pursued for thirteen weeks, at the expiration of which she was so much better, that I advised her to discontinue the use of medicine, and go into the country for a few months. To the present time she has continued to improve in health and appearance; has had no further occasion for medicine, with the exception of the night pills now and then to assist the action of the bowels; and certainly there are few individuals who contribute more to the enlivening and embellishment of the brilliant circle of fashion; nor have I a doubt, that when this meets her eye, she will instantly recognise the picture, and acknowledge that it is not in any part too highly coloured.

In April 1810, I received a visit from a gentleman, a Lieutenant Colonel in the East India Company's service, who had been twenty-eight years in India, during which long period he appeared to have taken considerable pains to destroy his constitution by every species of intemperance, not considering that the effects of a tropical climate are sufficient alone to make such an impression as can only be resisted by moderation and discretion. It would be difficult to convey to the reader an idea of the deranged state of this gentleman's health when he applied to me: it was decidedly one of the worst nervous cases I ever met with. Every part of his frame was affected; every function of his body was impaired; and there were strong indications of paralysis on the right side, which he called rheumatism, although he acknowledged that he had had what some medical men pronounced a paralytic fit. He was at this time in the forty-seventh year of his age, but had all the appearance of a man upwards of seventy. His mental faculties, and particularly his memory, were so much impaired, that before he had been a quarter of an hour from home, he would forget where he had intended to go; and in all the common occurrences of life was equally deficient: so much so, that he assured me he was often at a loss to recollect whether he had had his coffee after dinner. I prescribed a regular course of medicines and regimen for him, which he pursued with tolerable punctuality for about ten weeks, when I thought he was rather better. But he was himself of a different opinion; and, by the advice of some of his friends, he applied to another physician, certainly of the first eminence in his profession, and he continued under this gentleman's care upwards of five months, when he returned to me, and declared he thought himself get-



ting worse. I now represented to him the disadvantage of adopting different plans, without pursuing any for a sufficient length of time to manifest its efficacy. He acknowledged the justice of my observation, and declared he would adhere to whatever I prescribed for any length of time I required; and, certainly, for about four months he was tolerably tractable and punctual. During this time the symptoms varied; they were sometimes better, and sometimes worse; but, on the whole, he had acquired a considerable degree of improvement both in body and mind: and I have no doubt, that if he had continued the same plan, he would have gradually recovered his health. But, unfortunately, patients of this description are easily persuaded to fly from one remedy to another; and about this time this gentleman happened to meet with a brother officer, who had derived great benefit from the use of the Cheltenham waters, and my patient was prevailed on to try their efficacy, of which he soon had reason to repent; for, at the end of two months, he returned, greatly altered for the worse. He then continued under my care for a year and a half, constantly getting better, though slowly; and often inducing a return of the most alarming symptoms, by acts of indiscretion which he had not always resolution to resist. At length, however, he was perfectly restored; and I have no doubt, that if he could practice the self-denial, abstinence, and regularity of Cornaro, he might attain to a very advanced age. But this appears to be altogether impracticable; and he is frequently under the necessity of taking short courses of medicine to relieve morbid symptoms excited by occasional acts of intemperance.

A young lady, a native of Sicily, married to a British officer, was recommended to me last September, on account of a complaint which had been troublesome to her as long as she could remember, for which several Italian physicians had prescribed, without any advantage whatever, and which appeared to be considerably increased by the vicissitudes and moisture of our variable climate. I recommended a plan entirely different from any that had been previously adopted, and had the satisfaction to observe that a favourable effect was produced in a few weeks, which continued with regular progression until the most distressing symptoms were removed: and when she was about to leave this country, in March, both she and her husband assured me that she had never been so well since her marriage, at which time she was in the fifteenth year of her age, with all the bloom of youth and beauty, and apparently the picture of health. This lady's case was decidedly scrophulous, which, I believe, had never been suspected. But, unfortunately, it too often



happens that a scrophulous taint lurks in the habit of individuals who have the most healthy and interesting appearance. Their skin is generally very smooth and delicate, and their eyes clear and expressive. A female having such a taint, whether hereditary or generated by the artificial culture of a fashionable education, and entering at an early period into the gaiety of fashionable society, is likely to become consumptive, which is the reason that we find so many women among the higher ranks afflicted with pulmonary complaints, and which is the origin of those tubercles in the lungs so frequently discovered after death. But I would not advise persons to conclude, too hastily, that they are consumptive. I meet with cases almost every day, in which an erroneous conclusion on this subject has led to a very injudicious mode of treatment: and it is not long since I met with a lady who was persuaded, and all her friends believed, that she was far gone in a pulmonary consumption; whose complaints I ascertained clearly to be in the organs of digestion, with a little enlargement and induration of the liver, and by proper treatment restored her to as good a state of health as she ever enjoyed in her life.

This short sketch of a few cases cannot be imputed to me as an ostentatious display, or indelicate disclosure, by which some practitioners endeavour to arrogate to themselves the meed of superior talents. Having devoted myself for upwards of twenty years to a selected branch of my profession, which I have pursued with the most unremitting assiduity, it is only natural to conclude, that I must have acquired more knowledge and experience in the class of diseases which comprise the objects of my selection, in which I have certainly had a more extensive practice than any other physician of the present day, than if I had been engaged in the routine of general practice, in which the great variety often precludes the possibility of individual acumen. But in chronic complaints, particularly nervous, bilious, and scorbutic diseases, and in all cases of debility, the superiority of my mode of treatment is manifested daily, and will be happily experienced by all who try the effect of it, for a length of time proportioned to the duration and inveteracy of their symptoms; and I can confidently declare, from ample experience, that my plan, without precluding the enjoyment of any social pleasure or rational amusement, is calculated to prolong the period of existence, and to render life better worth enjoying; because it includes the radical cure of those chronic affections, which are the source of so much misery, and the preservation of a uniform good state of health, by preventing the accumulation of morbid symptoms in future,



The various constitutions of individuals, their different ages, and the diversity of their external circumstances, occasion a great variation in the appearances and sensations of different persons labouring under the same complaints; because most bodies have some weak parts, and those parts which are the weakest, generally sustain the first attacks of every disorder; therefore, the patient can never be too explicit, especially when the consultation is by letter.

In the course of a few months I shall publish another small tract, giving a detailed account of the diet and regimen which I consider best calculated for the preservation of health and prolongation of life, adapted to the affluent classes of society.

10, *Alfred Place, Bedford Square.*

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